

Message Text

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SUBJECT: VISIT TO USSR OF MEMBERS OF COUNCIL FOR US-USSR
HEALTH EXCHANGE: PROTOCOL DISCUSSIONS

REF: MOSCOW 2731

1. LEONARD ZION, RECENTLY RETURNED PARTICIPANT IN COUNCIL
FOR US-USSR HEALTH EXCHANGE DISCUSSIONS WITH VENEDIKTOV
AND OTHER MINISTRY OF HEALTH OFFICIALS GAVE HEW'S DR.
ROBERT FISCHER ON MARCH 2 A VIEW OF THESE DISCUSSIONS WHICH
IS ALMOST TOTALLY AT VARIANCE WITH THAT PRESENTED IN REFTEL.

2. ZION ATTENDED ALL SESSIONS WITH USSR MOH OFFICIALS; IN
HIS CALL TO FISCHER, HE WAS VERY POSITIVE IN HIS APPRAISAL
OF THE RESULTS OF THE MEETINGS AND MADE THE FOLLOWING
POINTS:

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A) THE SOVIETS WERE VERY COOPERATIVE, SEEMED ANXIOUS TO
REACH AGREEMENT ON A JOINT PROGRAM, AND MADE SEVERAL POSI-
TIVE SUGGESTIONS OF THEIR OWN.

B) WHEREAS COUNCIL MEMBERS HAD EXPECTED TO BE HOSTED BY
DR. BLOKHIN AT THE INSTITUTE FOR SOVIET AMERICAN RELATIONS,

THEY WERE PLEASED WHEN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH TOOK THE LEAD DURING THE DELEGATION'S VISIT.

C) VENEDIKTOV UNEXPECTEDLY GAVE THE GROUP A GOOD DEAL OF HIS TIME -- 2-1/2 HOURS ONE DAY AND 1-1/2 THE NEXT -- AND WAS RECEPTIVE IN HIS RESPONSE TO US PROPOSALS.

3. ACCORDING TO ZION, VENEDIKTOV MADE HIS CIVIL RIGHTS PITCH IN AN ASIDE TO BREININ DURING ONE OF THE MEETINGS. WHILE VENEDIKTOV EXPRESSED SOVIET CONCERN OVER THE US POSTURE ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE AND EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT THE US LINE WOULD MAKE THINGS "MORE DIFFICULT", HE DID NOT SHY AWAY FROM DISCUSSION OF THE PROTOCOL, ZION MAINTAINED.

4. ACCORDING TO ZION ALSO, WHEN VENEDIKTOV TALKED OF A "BRAIN DRAIN," HE WAS NOT ALLUDING TO SOVIET EMIGREES IN THE UNITED STATES, BUT TO POTENTIAL DRAIN OF SOVIET INNOVATIVE MEDICAL IDEAS TO THE US VIA THE EXCHANGE AND TO POTENTIAL DEFECTIONS AMONG PARTICIPATING SOVIET DOCTORS. THE COUNCIL FOR US-USSR HEALTH EXCHANGE IS PROPOSING A PROGRAM OF EXCHANGE FELLOWS, WITH SOVIET DOCTORS TO BE PLACED IN A VARIETY OF US INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING CORPORATIONS AS WELL AS HOSPITALS AND UNIVERSITIES. VENEDIKTOV'S CONCERN ON IDEA DRAIN HAS EVIDENTLY BEEN AROUSED BY THE HIGH INTEREST SHOWN BY US MEDICAL FIRMS IN THE PROPOSED EXCHANGE AND BY THEIR OBVIOUS ABILITY TO QUICKLY TRANSLATE IDEAS INTO MARKETABLE PRODUCTS (AN ABILITY LACKING IN THE

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USSR). VENEDIKTOV SAID THAT THE STATE COMMITTEE FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WOULD HAVE TO BE BROUGHT INTO THE EXCHANGE ON THE SOVIET SIDE TO PROTECT COPYRIGHTS AND TO MONITOR THE INFORMATION FLOW.

5. BY WAY OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION, THE CITIZENS EXCHANGE CORPS DOES HAVE A LONG HISTORY OF ACTIVITY WITH THE USSR, BUT THE COUNCIL FOR US-USSR HEALTH EXCHANGE IS A RELATIVE NEWCOMER TO THE SCENE. THE COUNCIL HAS SOME OF THE SAME PLAYERS AS THE CEC, HAS EVIDENTLY BEEN "AUTHORIZED" BY THE CEC TO ARRANGE FOR MEDICAL EXCHANGE WITH THE SOVIETS AND ENJOYS THE PARTICIPATION AND BACKING OF PRIMARILY BOSTON AREA MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS AND PRIVATE INDUSTRY. COUNCIL HAS TRIED TO ENLIST HEW SPONSORSHIP, BUT HEW HAS NOT GONE BEYOND GENERAL EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST. WE UNDERSTAND THAT AT SOME TIME DURING 1976 A PROPOSAL FOR A HEALTH EXCHANGE PROGRAM WAS SENT TO THE USSR. IT WAS IN THE INTEREST OF CONCLUDING SUCH A PROGRAM THAT THE US GROUP OF WHICH DR. BREININ WAS THE HEAD VISITED THE USSR.

6. COMMENT: DEPARTMENT FINDS IT DIFFICULT AT THIS TIME

TO RECONCILE THE WIDELY VARYING INTERPRETATIONS OF THE NATURE OF THE RECEPTION ACCORDED THE US GROUP. WE UNDERSTAND THAT ZION IS HIGHLY EXPERIENCED AT DEVELOPING AND PROMOTING HEALTH PROGRAMS, AND IS HIMSELF VERY COMMITTED TO GETTING THE US-SOVIET PROGRAM OFF THE GROUND. HE HAS GIVEN HEW A GLOWING REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS AND, IF THE SOVIETS WERE COOL TO US PROPOSALS DURING THE MEETING, HE HAS CHOSEN NOT TO SPEAK OF IT. IT IS CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT THE SOVIETS DID TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY AFFORDED BY THE VISIT OF A HIGH-LEVEL, INFLUENTIAL GROUP OF AMERICAN CITIZENS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN EXCHANGE, AND POSSIBLY IN TRADE WITH THE USSR, TO PASS ON THEIR DISQUIET OVER THE US HUMAN RIGHTS STANCE. IT APPEARS ALSO FROM VENEDIKTOV'S REMARKS THAT THEY MAY BE THREATENING "DIFFICULTIES" IN
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CARRYING THROUGH WITH SUCH EXCHANGES AS BEING A LIKELY OUT-COME OF A CONTINUATION OF THAT STANCE.
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